WOMEN NEWS

No. 37, June 1990

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION

The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination met at Vienna from 2 to 4 May 1990. The Committee comprises the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the specialized agencies and is chaired by the Secretary-General. Among the agenda items discussed at this meeting was the follow-up of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (see *Women 2000* No. 2, 1990).

Introducing the agenda item, the Secretary-General said that, in view of the priority given to the issue of the advancement of women in the United Nations, it was important for the executive heads to review the latest developments in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The purpose of the brief discussion was to continue to use the resources of the United Nations system on the issue and, within each organization, to make full use of the capacities of women. The purpose of activities was, he stressed, to bring women into the mainstream of development activities, of the peace process and of decision-making, so that their full force and experience could be brought to bear on the issues of the time.

The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna briefed the Committee on the recent review and appraisal undertaken by the Commission on the Status of Women, in which concern was expressed that the pace of progress in implementing the Strategies might have slowed to such an extent that the ultimate objective of equality by the year 2000 would be put at risk. At the same time, she said, there was a strong belief that carefully targeted action over the next five years could overcome the initial stagnancy. These were contained in the recommendations and conclusions adopted by the Commission, which set priorities to renew the pace of progress by emphasizing a number of key issues that were likely to produce multiplier effects in other areas. With regard to the United Nations system, the Director-General stressed the need for continued co-ordination as well as for giving priority to the advancement of women within the programmes of the organizations. She also pointed out that the or-

Members of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination with Margaret J. Anstee, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna

ganizations of the system should be exemplary employers in terms of equality in conditions of service. They should ensure that women had the same career opportunities as men and that more women reached the highest ranks of decision-making. This point had been noted in the recommendations and conclusions of the review and appraisal as a failing of the system.

The following statement was adopted by the Committee on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000:

> "1. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination notes the need for the international community to increase the pace of progress in the implementation of the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women as contained in the recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal conducted by the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations. The actions taken during the 1990s will be decisive in terms of whether the objective of equality between women and men is achieved, and the role of the United Nations system in this will continue to be important. Advancement of women should be an integral component of the other system-wide priorities for the 1990s. The Committee considers that its inclusion would enhance the impact of the new International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and the attainment of numerous environment and development objectives including the alleviation of poverty.
>
> "2. The recognition of the activities of and the progress made by the United Nations system confirmed by the appraisal of the progress made during the first five years of the Strategies is heartening. The injunctions for further work by the system at the monitoring, policy-formulation and operational levels constitute incentives to strengthen further individual and joint actions by the organizations of the system. The Committee considers that the joint effort for the advancement of women is noteworthy with its emphasis on joint programme planning, collaboration in specific projects and its practical orientation. It pledges to continue and strengthen this work, both in implementation of the existing system-wide medium-term plan for women and development for the period 1990-1995 and in the formulation of a new plan for the period 1996-2001. Particular attention will be paid to the improvement of the system's ability to increase awareness and provide technical, operational, financial and other forms of assistance in order to enable women to develop fully their productive capacity and potential, and thus participate more effectively in the mainstream of economic and social development.
>
> "3. Reflecting the importance of the actions by the individual organizations of the United Nations system as models in the implementation of international norms, the members of the Committee reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that the advancement of women is a strong policy priority within their organizations. Among these objectives is the improvement of the status of women within the respective secretariats in accordance with the policies established by their governing bodies, improved monitoring of the impact of programmes on women and development of new approaches in the light of emerging issues."

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN INCLUDED IN THE CONSTITUTION OF NAMIBIA

The new Constitution of Namibia, which came into force on the Day of Independence, 21 March 1990, is exemplary in providing for equality. With only one exception, it makes no distinction between men and women, referring only to persons or citizens. Not only has the principle of equality been established in a number of articles covering various aspects of life such as education, property ownership and political participation but provision has also been made for affirmative action to be taken to rectify past inequities.

In various articles, the theme of equality is preponderant: "All persons shall be equal before the law. No persons may be discrimi-

nated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status." (article 10); "All persons shall have the right ... to acquire, own and dispose of all forms of immovable and movable property ..." (article 16); "All citizens shall have the right to participate in peaceful political activity ..." (article 17); and "Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every citizen within Namibia ... Children shall not be allowed to leave school until they have completed their primary education or have attained the age of sixteen (16) years ..." (article 20).

Article 23 refers specifically to *apartheid* and affirmative action, and is quoted below in its entirety.

> "(1) The practice of racial discrimination and the practice and ideology of *apartheid* from which the majority of the people of Namibia have suffered for so long shall be prohibited and by Act of Parliament such practices, and the propagation of such practices, may be rendered criminally punishable by the ordinary Courts by means of such punishment as Parliament deems necessary for the purposes of expressing the revulsion of the Namibian people at such practices.
>
> "(2) Nothing contained in article 10 hereof shall prevent Parliament from enacting legislation providing directly or indirectly for the advancement of persons within Namibia who have been socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws or practices, or for the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at redressing social, economic or educational imbalances in the Namibian society arising out of past discriminatory laws or practices, or for achieving a balanced structuring of the public service, the police force, the defence force, and the prison service.
>
> "(3) In the enactment of legislation and the application of policies and practices contemplated by Sub-Article (2) hereof, it shall be permissible to have regard to the fact that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination and that they need to be encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation."

RECOGNITION OF ADDED BURDENS FOR WOMEN AFFECTED BY AIDS

It is becoming generally recognized that women are seriously affected by the social implications of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), even if they themselves are not infected. A pilot project was therefore developed by the Division for the Advancement of Women to reduce the burden of HIV/AIDS on the medical system and provide women with support, which would include the establishment of an organization of affected women. The project has been discussed in the Congo and has been agreed to in principle for implementation in that country with funding by the United Nations Development Programme and support from the World Health Organization (WHO). One aspect of the project will be the participation of affected women i.e. those who are HIV positive, or those who have a case in the family. A service bank will be set up for funding services for needy families and for opening drawing rights for future services when needed by women who are infected.

It is hoped that support for such projects will emerge from the Expert Group Meeting on HIV/AIDS and the role of national machinery for the advancement of women, which is to be held at Vienna from 24 to 28 September 1990.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL DISCUSSES WOMEN'S ISSUES

The first regular session of 1990 of the Economic and Social Council was held in New York from 1 to 25 May. Items pertaining to the advancement of women were discussed between 3 and 9 May and related mainly to the priority themes of the thirty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies.

READEX

Resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1990

1990/3	Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat
1990/4	Equality in political participation and decision- making
1990/5	Physical violence against detained women that is specific to their sex
1990/6	Women and children in Namibia
1990/7	Central American women: equality, development and peace
1990/8	Communications concerning the status of women
1990/9	Second report on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women
1990/10	Integration of women in the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade
1990/11	Situation of Palestinian women
1990/12	World conference on women in 1995
1990/13	Women and children under *apartheid*
1990/14	Action to increase awareness of the slow progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women
1990/15	Recommendations and conclusions arising from the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000
1990/16	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
1990/17	Elimination of discrimination against women in accordance with the aims of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Calendar of meetings: July-December 1990

July

Division for the Advancement of Women: Expert Group Meeting on Refugee and Displaced Women and Children, Vienna, 2-6 July

ILO: Design and Adaptation of Audio-visuals for Programmes addressing Women, Turin, 2 July-7 September.

August

Division for the Advancement of Women: Seminar on Disabled Women, 20-24 August

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP): East and South-east Asian Subregional Workshop on the Technical Processing of Information concerning Women in Development, Bangkok (two weeks)

FAO: Asia and Pacific meeting on women and statistics

September

Division for the Advancement of Women: Commemorative Seminar on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Kiev, 2-12 September

Division for the Advancement of Women: Expert Group Meeting on HIV/AIDS and the Role of National Machinery for the Advancement of Women, Vienna, 24-28 September (rescheduled from June 1990)

International Trade Centre/UNCTAD/GATT: Subregional workshop for women executives on export marketing, Vanuatu, September/October

October

UNRWA: Training workshop for Agency women's programme officers and other senior relief and social services staff, last quarter 1990

WHO/UNFPA: Interregional workshop on leadership and participation of women in maternal and child health and family planning, Brazzaville, 24-29 October

International Trade Centre/UNCTAD/GATT: Export marketing management for women entrepreneurs from selected African countries, Finland

ILO: Development and Management of Documentation Centres for Women, Turin, 1 October-16 November

November

ESCAP: Expert Group Meeting on the Promotion of Community Awareness for the Prevention of Prostitution, Thailand, 1-10 November

Division for the Advancement of Women: Expert Group Meeting on Vulnerable Women, including Migrant Women, Vienna, 26-30 November

UNIDO: African Regional Expert Group Meeting on Women in Agro-industry, Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania

ESCAP: Pacific Subregional Workshop on the Technical Processing of Information concerning Women in Development, South Pacific (two weeks)

December

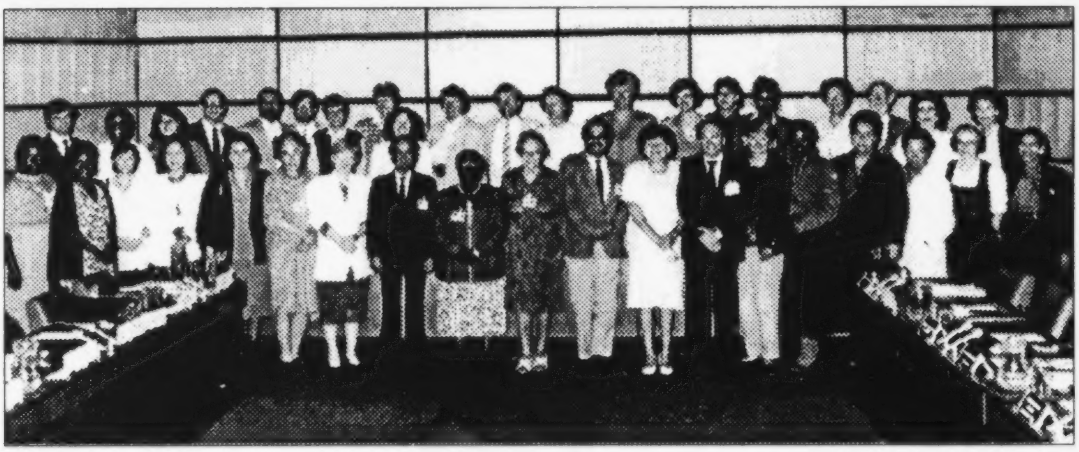
FAO: Statistics and Indicators, Rome, 3-5 December

Inter-agency meeting on operational activities, Rome, 6-7 December

WOMEN NEWS

No. 38, 1990

EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON REFUGEE AND DISPLACED WOMEN AND CHILDREN
Vienna, 2-6 July 1990



The Expert Group Meeting on Refugee and Displaced Women and Children was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women/UNOV/CSDHA, in co-operation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and with financial support from the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), from 2 to 6 July 1990 at Vienna.

The Meeting was attended by experts from Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan and the Sudan, which are host countries for refugees, as well as experts from countries that have been active in assisting refugees or are concerned with the issue: Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and United States of America. Other participants were from the agencies which provided settlement assistance to refugees, such as the Organization of African Unity, regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, individual experts, and women from refugee camps.

The objective of the Meeting was to examine the problems faced by refugee and displaced women and children and the measures taken to assist them, in particular, relief assistance and special relief programmes.

The Meeting identified a number of issues specifically faced by refugee and displaced women and children. These include difficulties associated with physical disability, physical safety and legal protection, emotional stress and socio-psychological effects of separation or death in the family, as well as changes in women's roles; limitations often found in the new environment, such as lack of adequate food, shelter, health care, social services, education and employment; participation of refugee and displaced women in decision-making; and assistance to refugee women as a development issue. The Meeting also discussed assistance programmes to meet their needs of refugee women. These included promoting self-sufficiency among refugee and displaced women by offering additional opportunities for literacy, adult education, vocational training and informal education programmes, recognizing and developing the ability of refugee and displaced women to participate in productive activities and income-generating projects and increasing

the participation of refugee and displaced women in health education programmes, mental health programmes and activities and community organization activities.

The Meeting adopted comprehensive recommendations for action in the interest of refugee and displaced women and children regarding the protection of and assistance to refugee and displaced women and children. The close link between protection and assistance measures was also stressed.

The Meeting urged that relevant agencies of the United Nations, international and regional organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and funding agencies that play a role in the protection of or assistance to refugees and displaced persons should be encouraged to develop policy statements on refugee and displaced women and children, including a time frame for implementation. A policy statement should provide for full integration of the concern for refugee and displaced women and children into every aspect of that agency's mandate and programmes.

Regarding the protection of refugee women and children, the Meeting recommended that the presence of qualified personnel, in particular international staff of relevant organizations, should be strengthened along escape routes, in reception centres, camps and settlements and in other areas where refugee women and children find themselves, in order to provide greater protection for the affected populations and to monitor and report regularly on the situation. Physical security of refugee women and children should be ensured in camps and settlements and military or armed attacks on refugee camps and settlements should be prohibited.

Concerning the protection of refugee and displaced children, the Meeting recommended that recruitment of refugee and displaced children into armed forces and armed groups be vigorously denounced and all necessary steps be taken to end this practice.

The meeting emphasized that greater recognition and designation should be made with respect to the plight of displaced persons. Since most of the protection problems faced by refugee women and children are common to those of displaced women and children, Governments and the international community should address this issue as a matter of urgency, taking into account the relevant provisions of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two 1977 Additional Protocols.

It was also recommended that systems for monitoring the nutritional status of all refugee and displaced women and children should be established and that refugee and displaced women should be included in the planning and implementation of skills training, such as education, health care, employment and income-generating programmes for the whole refugee community. Special programmes for women might sometimes be necessary for cultural reasons. The Meeting also recommended that support should be provided to expand the level of humanitarian aid and protection to children in conflict situations, including those displaced within their own country.

Finally, the Meeting recommended that special attention be devoted to unaccompanied, disabled and traumatized children on the basis of "the best interests of the child".

SEMINAR ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND DEMOGRAPHIC PHENOMENA IN FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA

The status of women and demography - the two subjects are so intimately linked, if not actually twinned, that to devote a Seminar to the way they interact might seem to be rehearsing a well-worn theme. And still, when, following the first contacts with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the Division for the Advancement of Women initiated its research into this subject, it quickly became apparent that there were only very few researchers who had inquired into the implications of fertility, migratory movements or health problems for the status of women. It is this side of the equation "women - demographic phenomena", the repercussions on the status of women, that was the subject of the Seminar.

Towards better integration of programmes for women and population programmes

The objective of the Seminar was certainly not only to fill a gap in the demographic literature but was also, in response to a requirement of UNFPA, which financed the event, to provide a forum for examining a number of obstacles to family-planning programmes (in Africa the term "family planning" is preferred to the term "birth control") raised by the particular problems of women, their needs, the obligations they feel *vis-à-vis* their families, and their own self image. UNFPA was also interested in exploring the possibilities of co-operation with a factor that has so far been most inconspicuous in the area of population programmes, namely, the national machinery for the advancement of women.

For the Division, this Seminar was a pioneer event in many respects. Not only in terms of its subject, demography, but also because it was convened to cover a limited geographical area, i.e. the French-speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The immediate purpose of the Seminar was to arrive at the formulation of projects in areas involving both

women's affairs and demographic phenomena. In this way, looking beyond the Seminar, the Division hoped to impart a new impulse and fresh ideas and also to identify new sources of financing for the national agencies, its traditional counterparts at the governmental and national levels.

Participants and organization

The participants came from three different backgrounds: 3 population unit directors, 6 representatives of national women's affairs agencies and 10 experts, including demographers, sociologists, economists and geographers. The larger number of experts is explained by the diversity of the topics before the seminar: the factors contributing to fertility; the medical and also the social consequences of maternity; adolescent pregnancy, its causes and its consequences in terms of social status; the situation of children in care; the interrelationship between AIDS and the status of women; and the risks and advantages associated with migration for young girls and adult and elderly women.

Lomé, the capital of Togo and the venue of meetings of great importance to Africa, was chosen to host the Seminar. The event lasted five days, from 28 May to 1 June 1990. The local organization of the Seminar was handled by the UNFPA Office and the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Benin, a recently created African research institute that has been very active in the field of demography.

The Seminar was opened by the representative of Mrs. Aithnard, Minister for Social Affairs and the Status of Women, and closed by the Minister herself.

Preparation and documentation

The Division prepared and distributed to all participants, two months before the meeting, a document representing an initial approach to the topics of the Seminar. The intention was, on the basis of a sample of the existing literature, to formulate a number of the questions that the experts would be called upon to address in their papers. Areas in which there had been practically no research were identified, actions were proposed and questions were raised.

It was on the basis of this initial approach that the experts and the directors of national agencies for the advancement of women or of population programmes were to draft their contributions. The proposed objective, that of luring the experts away from the time-honoured areas of inquiry, was achieved, at least in a certain number of papers. For example, two experts, a geographer and a sociologist, embarked on surveys of their own, one in Mali and the other in Burkina Faso, for the purpose of acquiring greater information on the situation of older women migrants and of children entrusted to others for care.

First days, first exchanges of opinion

One of the advantages of the long preparatory period, and also one of the innovative features of the Seminar, was the fact that there was no session scheduled specifically devoted to the presentation of the documents. Before their departure for Lomé, the participants had all received at least a few of the documents and several hours of the first day were taken up by a reading and study session. Mrs. Gaudence Habimana, Director of the National Population Office in Rwanda, was elected Chairwoman of the Seminar and Mrs. Awa Marie Coll-Seck, Head of Service at the Ministry of Health and Education of Senegal, was elected rapporteur.

A critique of existing projects

The central theme of the first exchanges of opinion on the papers submitted by the experts and the secretariat was the slowness of the progress achieved with regard to the advancement of women and in the area of population activities. This view was to find repeated expression during the discussions of the working group. Looking beyond specific national conditions in an attempt to find an explanation for this slow progress, the participants pointed out a number of weaknesses in the design, implementation and follow-up of the programmes. There was reference to a lack of in-depth studies on the societies in which the programmes were to be applied and on their needs and traditions. A number of participants felt that the efforts undertaken to generate a positive public response to specific programmes were inadequate; a large-scale information campaign of limited duration was not enough in the face of the constant pressure of tradition. Mention was made of the overly ambitious objectives of many of the programmes and of the fact that all of them appeared, in a more or less disguised manner, to be directed at the identical goal of limiting fertility. According to this idea, which was to resurface in the discussions of the working group, women's lives were being "segmentalized", with planners interested only in their reproductive role and in their fertile years, whereas the problems of adolescent girls or of women over the age of 50 were largely ignored.

Health and migration: a life-cycle approach

In order to avoid the pitfall of considering women only in their child-bearing years, the participants examined the problems of health and migration as they affect young girls, adult women and elderly women.

With regard to health, it was suggested that the national women's affairs agencies should undertake a major review of health policies, mobilizing consultants and funds and seeking dialogue with other interested ministries. The objective would be to refor-

mulate health policies so as once again to take into account the problems of adolescent girls and older women. For the immediate future, the participants identified a number of target groups, such as children in care, women employed as domestics, or elderly women with numerous children in urban areas, for all of whom special programmes should be devised. In a number of particular areas, such as those concerned with measures against infertility, sexually transmissible disease and AIDS, the participants called for energetic action by the family-planning services and the ministries concerned.

Reference was made during the discussions on migration to special programmes. These were not taken up in the recommendations for the reason that the differences from one country to another, and even one city to another, appeared such as to make it difficult to apply any general approaches. Among the topics considered at the Seminar was the migration of young children towards the cities in search of work in the markets, as is the case for example in Lomé, or as part of exchanges of children. In this connection, several participants expressed the view that there was a need for greater research into these practices, with particular reference to the situation of the little girls involved. There was a long discussion of the possibility of encouraging scholarship systems for children in care and of the usefulness of boarding schools or homes. The possibility was also raised of establishing new channels for the recruitment of young girls arriving to work in the cities, including the organization of accommodation from the outset.

Fertility: promoting alternative determinants of the status of women

Two key ideas emerged from the discussions: the first was that women are generally recognized solely as agents of procreation, with insufficient attention being given to their other roles, e.g. as producers and merchants. Accordingly, one of the ways leading not only to the limitation of births but also towards the advancement of women as fully fledged individuals lies in the development of women's status throughout the full range of their activities.

The second key idea was that one of the explanations for the high number of children born is to be found in the constraints that society imposes on women by allowing them no other means of ensuring their security and providing for their daily survival. As a result, women will only become involved in family planning programmes when new ways of ensuring their economic security and that of their family have been made available to them.

Building on these two observations, the Seminar formulated recommendations in four areas: changes in attitudes and education with regard to population issues, the legal and political context, the economy and family planning. In each of these areas, examples were cited of actions or programmes better suited to the needs and real conditions of women. For example, in the economic area, the Seminar drew attention to the usefulness of providing women in the informal sector with training designed to make them more competitive. The participants also recommended that information activities should be directed at women heads of household and that the status of elderly women should be upgraded by entrusting specific activities to them.

A concern: increasing and disseminating information

One of the key concerns expressed at the Seminar seems to have been the dissemination of information. For example, the participants recommended that the national agencies working to advance the status of women, together with the international organizations, should encourage the establishment in all countries of statistical centres to gather data on women. This would serve a two-fold purpose: the monitoring of the quality of the data collected regarding women and the dissemination of information, including that developed by other statistical centres.

Still on the question of the dissemination of information, the participants advanced the idea of different publications to be jointly produced by the Demographic Research Unit of Benin University and the Division. One of these publications should summarize the substance of the Seminar's working documents and discussions, while the other might be in the form of a statistical information bulletin similar to the *Data Highlights* currently prepared by the Division, but dealing with sub-Saharan French-speaking Africa. The Economic Commission for Africa should co-operate in the preparation of these publications, which could be translated into English.

Finally, relying on financing by UNFPA, the Division should organize the setting up, in French-speaking Africa, of the WIS bibliographical system currently in use in Vienna. The national women's affairs organizations, the population agencies and the demographic units ought, in this way, to be drawn into a WIS network for the purpose of organizing the circulation of bibliographical information in French-speaking Africa south of the Sahara. One of the components of this project would be the compilation of reference material on research work carried out on French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa at French or Belgian universities.

WOMEN NEWS

No. 39, October 1990

GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER UNITED NATIONS ACTIVITIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly is scheduled, from 24 to 26 October 1990, to consider programmes for women under agenda items 100 "Elimination of discrimination against women" and 101 "Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000". The Assembly will have before it reports (A/45/426 and A/45/489) of the Secretary-General on both agenda items and a report (A/45/347) on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), as well as the report (A/45/38) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Assembly, among other things, will examine the progress made in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Strategies as well as plans for future activities.

Priority themes

Preparations for the priority themes to be discussed by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session in 1991 are well under way.

The theme under the heading of **Equality**, "Vulnerable women, including migrant women" includes such groups as young, elderly and disabled women as well as female heads of household. The combination of being old or young, disabled or the head of household as well as female has a multiplier effect, and it often implies poverty, social neglect and isolation. Thus, some of the problems of vulnerability can be approached in terms of a comprehensive social policy. A seminar on this topic to be held at Vienna from 26 to 30 November 1990 will provide further input to the Secretary-General's report.

The theme under the heading of **Development** is "National, regional and international machinery for the effective integration of women in the development process, including non-governmental organizations". Since the integration of women in the development process is a global objective, its achievement depends largely on joint international efforts and the sharing of experiences. Together with UNIFEM, the Division for the Advancement of Women is diagnosing the needs for assistance of national machinery in all regions.

The theme under the heading of **Peace** is "Refugee and displaced women and children". The needs of refugees and displaced women and children were discussed by an expert group meeting at Vienna in July 1990 (see *Women News* No. 38) under four major categories: protection issues, assistance issues, durable solutions and participation in decision-making. It was recognized at the meeting that the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of refugee women must be respected, and emphasized that greater attention should be paid to the plight of displaced persons.

1995 World conference

The Economic and Social Council, by its resolution 1990/12, adopted the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women to hold a world conference on women in 1995, and also requested the Secretary-General to make proposals on the preparation and convening of the world

conference to the Commission at its thirty-fifth session. The purpose of the world conference would be (a) to conduct the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and to determine those measures necessary to ensure that the objectives of the Strategies are achieved during the last five years of the century; (b) to provide Governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations and bodies of the United Nations system with a focus for preparations of national reviews and appraisals; (c) to provide a forum for an exchange of experience; and (d) to set targets and mobilize interest in the issue.

Interregional consultation on women in public life

At its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly endorsed the convening of a high-level interregional consultation on women in public life. The Economic and Social Council recommended that the consultation should have maximum participation by Governments and non-governmental organizations and should elaborate an agenda for the first half of the decade for political action encouraging all women to participate actively in the political process.

It has been suggested that the consultation, which will convene in the Hofburg Palace at Vienna from 10 to 12 September 1991, should be entitled "Women in politics: the interregional consultation on women in public life", and that its emphasis should be on the difference women can make in politics. The scarcity of women in decision-making has been amply documented but there are almost no formal legal impediments to women exercising their right to participate. There is, however, a gap between women's activism in the issues of immediate and often local importance to them, and their participation in the broader national and international arenas, in which the issues of concern to them may be submerged by the interests of an overwhelming majority of men. Moreover, women's perception of global issues is often different from that of men. The purpose of the consultation is to examine the factors that would encourage women to translate their concern for issues at a local level into an interest in national political participation and to elaborate an agenda of issues that could mobilize women's interest in politics. It should further show how women decision makers in large enough numbers would reach different conclusions, set different priorities and suggest new solutions.

Ideally, the consultation would bring together active political leaders from all over the world, nominated by their Governments but participating in their individual capacity. Each country would send one or several women who currently hold office in government, political parties, unions or interest associations and who are considered to have the potential for high office. Based on a combination of formal and informal meetings, the consultation would agree on a final agenda of action to be presented to the world at large by the mass media.

The success of the consultation will depend on the level of national participation, the extent to which the preparations and the consultation itself receive attention in national and international mass media and the degree to which multi-partisan issues can be identified and agreed upon.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE INTEGRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE INTO SOCIETY

An observer from the Division for the Advancement of Women attended the International Symposium on the Integration of Young People into Society, which was organized by the Youth Unit of the Social Development Division, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, at Toledo, Spain, from 4 to 8 June 1990. Despite the few female participants, the particular situation of young women was discussed at length. It was noted that too often the term "youth" referred to the dominant group of young men. Consequently, the general term was replaced in a number of contexts by the term "young women and young men" in order to underline the gender-related differences and to draw attention to the particular situation of both genders. The conclusions and recommendations of the symposium include a paragraph on the situation of young women stating that they comprise half of the young population and that concrete measures should be undertaken to achieve equality of opportunity and equal access to full participation in development. The report entitled "Obstacles to full integration of young women into society" presented to the symposium will be a background paper for the expert group meeting on vulnerable women to be held in November.

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Update of status report

Following the ratification by Belize, Bolivia and Grenada on 16 May, 8 June and 30 August 1990, respectively, States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women number 104 as of 30 September 1990.

Commemorative seminar to mark tenth anniversary

A commemorative seminar to mark the tenth anniversary of the Convention was held at Kiev from 2 to 12 September 1990. Organized jointly by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the seminar aimed to raise awareness of the Convention and its applicability at the national level; to permit an exchange of experience between countries; to demonstrate the benefits that can be derived from becoming a party to the Convention; and to provide assistance and guidance to Governments in fulfilling their reporting obligations. Participants attended from 20 countries, both States parties to the Convention and those that had not ratified.

While providing a forum for countries from all over the world to discuss the Convention, the seminar produced conclusions on its benefits and implementation. The importance of establishing efficient national machinery to work in co-operation with non-governmental organizations was stressed, as was the necessity of disseminating the Convention in order to raise awareness among women themselves. The collection of gender-specific data and their integration into national plans and policy formulation by all Governments was considered necessary. The process of preparing national reports should be used as a tool to strengthen co-operation between national machinery, national statistical agencies, ministries, research institutes and non-governmental organizations. It was suggested that all draft reports should be referred to women's organizations for comments before being finalized. It was emphasized that the advancement of women was not an issue for women only but a global issue for society as a whole, and that information programmes should therefore be addressed to men as a special target group since men held the decision-making positions.

THE AFRICA PRIZE FOR LEADERSHIP FOR THE SUSTAINABLE END OF HUNGER

For the first time a woman is winner of The Hunger Project's Africa Prize for Leadership. Esther Ocloo, founder of Women's World Banking, was announced as co-winner of the 1990 Prize in a global press conference. Simultaneous events linked by satellite were held in more than 100 cities around the world on 23 August 1990. The Hunger Project, an international non-governmental organization whose goal is to eradicate starvation by the year 2000, has awarded the prize annually since 1987 to distinguished Africans who have exhibited exceptional leadership to bring about the sustainable end of hunger at a national, regional or continent-wide level. The international jury based their decision to honour Ms. Ocloo this year on her untiring efforts to relieve the situation of African women by giving them the possibility of obtaining training and credit for the acquisition of labour-saving devices. As women produce 80 per cent of the continent's food, any assistance given to them plays a role in reducing hunger.

The ceremony was broadcast from Zimbabwe, where the 1988 prize winner, President Robert Mugabe spoke, from Czechoslovakia where President Vaclav Havel spoke, and from New York where the winners of the Prize were announced by Bradford Morse, former Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. Ms. Ocloo shares the prize with General Obasanjo, who was honoured for his promotion of agriculture as a key to development. Introducing the ceremony held at Vienna, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women referred to hunger in Africa as the most shameful problem on the world's agenda and said that promoting the advancement of women would help to solve the food problem in Africa.

SEMINAR ON DISABLED WOMEN

A seminar on disabled women was convened at Vienna from 20 to 24 August 1990. Co-organized by the Disabled People's International and the Division for the Advancement of Women, the seminar was attended

by 20 experts and 20 observers from Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, and 1 consultant. The seminar examined the obstacles to the full integration of disabled women in development in the context of their double discrimination of being a woman and a disabled person and focused on practical measures to be taken in this respect. A full report of the seminar will be the subject of a future issue of *Women 2000*.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME SUPPORTS PROJECTS FOR WOMEN

For millions of poor women across the world, the food aid provided by the World Food Programme is a stepping stone to a better life. In 1989, the Programme allocated $US 323 million to projects that directly involved and benefited women. This makes the Programme the largest source of funds in the United Nations system for projects reaching poor, low-income, needy, unskilled and destitute women.

Traditionally responsible for the family's needs, women are crucial to household food security. Helping women to earn an income is thus a key step in the battle against hunger. Additional family income is commonly used to improve the family diet and pay for children's education as well as for the purchase of labour-saving devices. Earning more money is specially important for single mothers - at least one-third of households in the developing world are headed by a woman, and most of these families live in dire poverty. In many countries, these rates are even higher because of male migration to large cities or abroad.

A large share of the aid is channelled through food-for-work projects reaching the very poor, the hungry and the unemployed - most of whom are women. Food aid can also be used as an incentive to attend training courses. Distributed through health centres, food rations help women to overcome nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy and lactancy. Food aid does not merely provide women with needed protein and carbohydrates, but also helps them to build a better life for themselves and their families.

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND SUPPORTS RESEARCH ON WOMEN, POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is financing a comprehensive project, entitled "Women and the demographic processes", being carried out by the United Nations Population Division. The expert group meeting on international migration policies and the status of female migrants held in March at San Miniato, Italy (see *Women News*, No. 36) was one component of this project which, as an integral part of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, also deals with women as internal migrants and with women's reproductive health status.

UNFPA activities in the field of women, population and development are increasing each year through the implementation of a four-year strategy to strengthen the Fund's capacity to deal with these issues. This strategy, which is now an integral part of the Fund's strategic programming efforts, has been instrumental in heightening awareness among staff of the linkages between improvement in the status of women and the achievements of other objectives of population and development programmes.

In November 1989, UNFPA organized the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-First Century at Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The Forum adopted the "Amsterdam Declaration - A better life for future generations". The list of programme priorities is headed by the increase of female literacy and the achievement of universal enrolment of girls in primary school; the need to raise the social and economic value of girls in the family, community and national development; and the need to increase women's participation in decision-making and the management of population policies and programmes and of special programmes for the economic development of women, with the aim of achieving equality of representation. The Forum participants called on all countries "to strive to improve the role and status of women in all spheres of life and to ensure that women actively participate in and benefit from all population and development activities" and further called on women's organizations to "take a leading role in increasing the effectiveness and impact of population policies and in safeguarding specific women's concerns in that context".

WOMEN NEWS

No. 40, November 1990

WOMEN AND AIDS

The Expert Group Meeting on Women and HIV/AIDS and the Role of National Machinery for the Advancement of Women was held at Vienna from 24 to 28 September 1990. The Meeting stressed the importance of accelerating the advancement of women as a means of combating the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and brought together specialists in demography, sociology, medicine, public health and human rights, and heads of national machinery. The problem of AIDS was approached from a social and economic viewpoint in the light of its negative effects on the advancement of women, and emphasis was placed on the role to be played by national machinery in dealing with the prevention and the consequences of AIDS. While the heightened risk and negative effects of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/AIDS have already been recognized as additional obstacles to the advancement of women, the reverse situation is also becoming apparent; namely, that the lower status of women affects the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Funded by the Government of Sweden and convened at the request of the Economic and Social Council, the Meeting was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), which is the focal point within the United Nations system for AIDS-related activities. Support and assistance were also given by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund. Thirteen experts participated in the Meeting. High-level representatives of 10 Member States, and 13 non-governmental organizations attended as observers. The Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; the United Nations Population Fund and WHO also attended as observers. In addition to the plenary sessions, two working groups discussed two themes related to the subject: prevention and consequences.

The recommendations of the Meeting will be brought to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-fifth session, under the priority theme of "Development: national, regional and international machinery for the effective integration of women in the development process, including non-governmental organizations". The findings of the Meeting will also form part of the contribution of the United Nations Office at Vienna to World AIDS Day (1 December), the theme of which for 1990 is "Women".

In opening the Meeting, the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women said that the objective was to help national machinery determine its level of involvement in both prevention and assistance and to encourage national AIDS programmes to include the interests of women in their activities. She called on the participants to concentrate on the relationship between the pandemic and the lower status of women and on how improving that status could check the spread of HIV/AIDS. The representative

of WHO reported on the incidence of HIV/AIDS and on trends in the pandemic and its effects on women, in both health and socio-economic terms, and said that every country in the world had established national AIDS programmes. She concluded that the pandemic would be controllable only if women were to advance socially and culturally.

NATIONAL MACHINERY

The participants defined national machinery as any institutional arrangement recognized by the Government as being responsible for the advancement of women and concluded that it was the key to the development of national policies and to the mobilization of adequate resources to carry out programmes under the responsibility of the Government. Furthermore, national machinery was essential for organizing a social response to the threat to women's status presented by AIDS and to the impact of their status on the spread of the pandemic. It was stressed that national machinery should focus its concern on the status of women and not duplicate activities best carried out under health programmes, and that links should therefore be established between national machinery and national AIDS programmes. Only through a dynamic partnership between the United Nations system, the national machinery for the advancement of women, the Government and non-governmental organizations could there be an improvement in the status of women and a mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS.

PREVENTION

The Meeting recommended that the United Nations system should identify sources of funding to enable national machinery and non-governmental organizations to organize programmes to assist women in combating the social dimensions of the pandemic. The extent to which women were represented on national AIDS committees and the extent to which proactive strategies were employed to involve women's non-governmental organizations and grass-roots organizations in national programme strategies should be evaluated. National machinery should encourage non-governmental organizations to co-operate, especially at the field level, in the implementation of prevention policies and programmes for women and children; for example, in information, education and counselling. National machinery should appoint an AIDS co-ordinator and ensure co-ordination with sectoral ministries, government agencies and non-governmental organizations. National AIDS committees should appoint the national machinery co-ordinators as full members of their committees.

Recognizing that AIDS and the transmission of HIV to women resulted mainly from sexual intercourse, blood transfusions and parenteral (skin-piercing), as well as from perinatal transmission, the Meeting made its recommendations to national machinery accordingly. With regard to sexual behaviour, it was recommended that national machinery should organize culture-sensitive research, especially on the prevalence of various sexual practices and how each practice affected HIV transmission rates. To reduce the need for women to have blood transfusions, national machinery should support interventions aimed at reducing ectoptic pregnancies, illegal abortions, and cases of anaemia and an excessive number of pregnancies. National machinery should advocate counselling for HIV-infected women to enable them to make informed decisions on reproduction; collaborate with national AIDS committees to ensure that immunization programmes were not jeopardized by misinformation on the risks of injections; work to counteract those social conditions that led many women to become drug users; and encourage the education of the public, particularly in regard to the avoidance of unnecessary injections. Furthermore, in order to enable women to protect themselves effectively, national machinery should assess the effectiveness of public information and education efforts in imparting gender-sensitive information on the relative transmission risks of various sexual activities as well as the problem of street children and their involvement in drugs and commercial sex and, more generally, violence against women and children. It should monitor the effectiveness of programmes addressing intravenous drug use among women and children, promote research, actively work to combat traditional practices that were harmful to the health of women and play a role in educating the public about the risk that accompanied sexual relations when a traumatic mutilating practice such as female circumcision had been carried out.

CONSEQUENCES

The Meeting recognized that the human rights of women, who already suffered *de facto* unequal status, were being further eroded as a consequence of HIV/AIDS. It recommended that national machinery should advocate the protection of human rights to combat discrimination and that special efforts should be made to protect those groups that were most vulnerable. Innovative strategies and actions to provide support and care to meet the medical, psychological, financial and legal needs of those affected should be facilitated. National machinery, in collaboration with national AIDS committees, should encourage the strengthening of other health services that raised the overall health status of women and adequate counselling services should be available to women and should be addressed to their special needs. In order to strengthen the national AIDS efforts, national machinery should facilitate the efficient management of the available resources. Special efforts should be made to enhance women's leadership and management capabilities.

The participants recommended that national machinery should encourage action-oriented research on the economic, social and cultural consequences to women of the AIDS pandemic, and facilitate the integration of voluntary HIV testing into existing programmes for safe motherhood, child survival and family planning. Besides seeking to empower women, the Meeting concluded that national machinery must seek to change societal attitudes that negatively affected women. Through national and international campaigns and programmes, special efforts must be made to address the crucial matter of co-operation between men and women in HIV prevention and control.

Support for the development of information on AIDS and women should be provided by international assistance. The Meeting recommended that the United Nations system should develop education programmes on sexuality in consultation with women's non-governmental organizations, taking into consideration different cultural and religious backgrounds as well as education within the family context. Furthermore, the United Nations system should advocate the allocation of more government resources to health care and to AIDS services; publicize widely the strong linkage between the spread of AIDS and the low status of women; and stress the importance of programmes on AIDS and women as part of national development programmes.

PARIS DECLARATION ON WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME (AIDS)*

The International Conference on the Implications of AIDS for Mothers and Children was held in Paris from 27 to 30 November 1989, to hear scientific presentations and to discuss the policy implications of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection for these important population groups. Based on the discussions and findings from the Conference, the assembled Ministers of Health and their representatives declare:

Considering the extensive scientific and psychosocial implications presented by HIV infection/AIDS in women, children and families, and bearing in mind the need to consider the problems of AIDS in mothers and children in the light of a broad approach to the health of women, children and families and the goal of Health for All by the Year 2000;

Recognizing that the AIDS pandemic - closely associated with problems of drug abuse - has a particularly adverse effect on women and children, and that they are both increasingly exposed to the risk of HIV infection and also suffer extensively from the social and economic impact of HIV infection/AIDS;

Recognizing that the deterioration of the economic situation in many countries adversely affects the health and social status of populations, and in particular, that of women and children;

Recalling the recent adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, the World Health Assembly, and the London Declaration of January 1988 on AIDS prevention and, in particular, the need to respect the human rights and dignity of people infected with HIV, their families and those with whom they live;

Acknowledging the leading role of the World Health Organization in the guidance and coordination of AIDS education, prevention, control and research and noting with appreciation the efforts of the World Health Organization/United Nations Development Programme Alliance, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other intergovernmental organizations in contributing to the implementation of the Global AIDS

Emphasizing the efforts of national AIDS programmes and the role of governments, nongovernmental and voluntary organizations, and the public and private sectors in implementing the Global AIDS Strategy at all levels;

Considering that the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS for women and children requires strengthening and improving the primary health care system, education, and other psychological and social support programmes for women, children and families;

Therefore, given the urgent need to promote and protect the health of women, children and families, we appeal to all governments, the United Nations system, within which the World Health Organization has the responsibility of directing and coordinating the global fight against AIDS, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community, health and social professionals and the public at large:

1. To assume leadership and to mobilize the necessary resources, both human and financial, to actively support the prevention and care of HIV infection/AIDS in women and children, particularly in those countries that are most affected and with the greatest economic need, and in conformity with the Global AIDS Strategy.

2. To enhance the role of and the social economic and legal status of women and children; to ensure full participation of women in AIDS programmes at all levels; and to respect the human rights and dignity of women and children, including those who are HIV-infected.

3. To further develop and implement innovative, multi-faceted health education programmes for prevention of HIV infection/AIDS. Information and education programmes for and by young people, including adolescents, should emphasize their responsibilities to prevent the spread of infection to themselves and in their role as future parents.

4. To emphasize the need to prevent stigmatization and discrimination against people with HIV infection/AIDS and those at risk, in all areas of life and for all services, including school.

5. To ensure adequate recognition of the problem of AIDS and HIV infection for all affected populations by developing and maintaining effective national epidemiological surveillance and case reporting systems.

6. To ensure that the HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes be coordinated or integrated with all other programmes for women, children and families, particularly maternal and child health, family planning and sexually transmitted disease control programmes and to review and strengthen the policies and management of the health and other social services with due consideration to women's perspectives.

7. To ensure that HIV testing is offered to women and children as an integral but voluntary part of health programmes, including counselling and other psychosocial support, with due respect to confidentiality.

8. To promote safe motherhood for all women and ensure that HIV-infected women receive appropriate information and have access to health services, including family planning, counselling and other psychosocial support so that they can personally make informed decisions about childbearing.

9. To ensure that HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes provide necessary support for families affected by HIV/AIDS by mobilizing health and social services to respond to emerging needs, including for families that suffer discrimination, that are not able to provide child care, or for those children who are abandoned or orphaned.

10. To emphasize availability of and access to necessary health care, including treatment, and to other social and support services for HIV-infected women and children, including recommended immunizations.

11. To continue to promote, develop and support programmes for breast-feeding as a basic component of a sound health and nutrition policy.

12. To ensure adequate and safe blood collection and transfusion services, including use of appropriate screening tests and indications for transfusion.

13. To recognize the close link between HIV infection/AIDS and drug abuse, which increases the risk of HIV transmission, and to assure availability of comprehensive health care, including drug abuse treatment and prevention programmes to minimize the risk of HIV infection of men, women and unborn children by this route.

14. To ensure that appropriate priorities and resources are devoted to research on HIV infection/AIDS in women, children and families, and develop joint research programmes, including programmes on prevention, diagnosis, treatment, medical care and the broader related issues affecting health and social conditions of women and children. The research should also focus on the alternative approaches to providing health and other social services for HIV affected women, children and families.

15. To recognize the crucial role of women in the Global AIDS Strategy and to accelerate the process of empowerment of women against AIDS.

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* The importance of this declaration was stressed by the forty-third World Health Assembly in its resolution WHA43.10